

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



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science in ACTION

BUILDING A SCIENTIFIC FOUNDATION FOR SOUND ENVIRONMENTAL DECISIONS

THE LEARNING BARGE GROWING AMERICA'S GREEN ECONOMY WITH RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

2007 EPA P3 Award Winner

The Elizabeth River in Virginia is one of the most polluted rivers feeding into the Chesapeake Bay. Students supported by EPA's P3 Award program decided to develop the world's only floating classroom on a barge – called The Learning Barge – to teach children and the public how to achieve a swimmable, fishable Elizabeth River by 2020. This unique, mobile field station provides students, teachers and the public with compelling, on-the-water education about stewardship and ecology of an urban river. The barge supports environmental research, teacher training, education, public outreach and stewardship for an urban population with limited public access to the river.

Designed by the University of Virginia's School of Architecture, the 32' by 120' barge is powered solely by the wind and sun and accommodates 149 passengers. A living wetland nursery on a steel deck barge symbolizes the marriage of the environment and a working harbor where industries are cooperating to restore the health of the river.

Total EPA Investment
\$85,000

Return on EPA Investment

Seven new jobs (full-time education manager and barge keeper) and 5 college-graduate seasonal employees. Also, **12 volunteers** including major shipyard leaders.

The barge was built by the University of Virginia's P3 Award student team and was launched in September 2009. During its construction, the project involved more than 34 undergraduate



students. From October to December 2009, **1700 students participated in learning sessions** on the barge. The 2010 season has already been booked for more than 5,000 students. Future seasons will be expanded to 2 sessions per day, increasing the number of **students reached per season to 8,000 to 10,000.**

EPA's P3 Award

In its sixth year, EPA's P3 – People, Prosperity, and the Planet – Award competition is unique in the federal government. Teams of college students from a variety of academic disciplines are awarded a \$10,000 grant to design a solution to a sustainability challenge. The teams work on their designs during the academic school year, and then bring them to the annual National Sustainable Design Expo in Washington, DC, to compete for the EPA P3 Award. This prestigious award is judged by a panel of national

experts in sustainability brought together by the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Winning teams receive a grant of up to \$75,000 to implement their designs or move them to the marketplace.

OTHER AWARDS:

<http://www.arch.virginia.edu/learningbarge/awards.html>

OTHER LINKS:

EPA Project reports:

<http://www.epa.gov/ncer/learningbarge>

Elizabeth River Project:

<http://www.elizabethriver.org>

UVA Project site:

<http://www.virginia.edu/learningbarge/>

EPA P3 site:

<http://www.epa.gov/P3>

CONTACT: Cynthia Nolt-Helms, EPA P3 Program Manager, (202) 343-9693
nolt-helms.cynthia@epa.gov

